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APPLICATION NO.	FILING DATE	FIRST NAMED INVENTOR	ATTORNEY DOCKET NO.	CONFIRMATION NO.
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10/517,063

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Yoichi Mori

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EXAMINER

NGUYEN, NGOC YEN M

ART UNIT

PAPER NUMBER

1793

MAIL DATE

DELIVERY MODE

12/08/2009

PAPER

Please find below and/or attached an Office communication concerning this application or proceeding.

The time period for reply, if any, is set in the attached communication.

Office Action Summary	Application No. 10/517,063	Applicant(s) MORI ET AL.	
	Examiner Ngoc-Yen M. Nguyen	Art Unit 1793	

-- The MAILING DATE of this communication appears on the cover sheet with the correspondence address --

Period for Reply

A SHORTENED STATUTORY PERIOD FOR REPLY IS SET TO EXPIRE 3 MONTH(S) OR THIRTY (30) DAYS, WHICHEVER IS LONGER, FROM THE MAILING DATE OF THIS COMMUNICATION.

- Extensions of time may be available under the provisions of 37 CFR 1.136(a). In no event, however, may a reply be timely filed after SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- If NO period for reply is specified above, the maximum statutory period will apply and will expire SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- Failure to reply within the set or extended period for reply will, by statute, cause the application to become ABANDONED (35 U.S.C. § 133). Any reply received by the Office later than three months after the mailing date of this communication, even if timely filed, may reduce any earned patent term adjustment. See 37 CFR 1.704(b).

Status

- 1) ☒ Responsive to communication(s) filed on 15 September 2009.
- 2a) ☐ This action is **FINAL**. 2b) ☒ This action is non-final.
- 3) ☐ Since this application is in condition for allowance except for formal matters, prosecution as to the merits is closed in accordance with the practice under *Ex parte Quayle*, 1935 C.D. 11, 453 O.G. 213.

Disposition of Claims

- 4) ☒ Claim(s) 1-16 is/are pending in the application.
- 4a) Of the above claim(s) 9-14 is/are withdrawn from consideration.
- 5) ☐ Claim(s) _____ is/are allowed.
- 6) ☒ Claim(s) 1-8, 15-16 is/are rejected.
- 7) ☐ Claim(s) _____ is/are objected to.
- 8) ☐ Claim(s) _____ are subject to restriction and/or election requirement.

Application Papers

- 9) ☐ The specification is objected to by the Examiner.
- 10) ☐ The drawing(s) filed on _____ is/are: a) ☐ accepted or b) ☐ objected to by the Examiner.
Applicant may not request that any objection to the drawing(s) be held in abeyance. See 37 CFR 1.85(a).
Replacement drawing sheet(s) including the correction is required if the drawing(s) is objected to. See 37 CFR 1.121(d).
- 11) ☐ The oath or declaration is objected to by the Examiner. Note the attached Office Action or form PTO-152.

Priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119

- 12) ☐ Acknowledgment is made of a claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(a)-(d) or (f).
- a) ☐ All b) ☐ Some * c) ☐ None of:
1. ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received.
 2. ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received in Application No. _____.
 3. ☐ Copies of the certified copies of the priority documents have been received in this National Stage application from the International Bureau (PCT Rule 17.2(a)).

* See the attached detailed Office action for a list of the certified copies not received.

Attachment(s)

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1) <input type="checkbox"/> Notice of References Cited (PTO-892) | 4) <input type="checkbox"/> Interview Summary (PTO-413) |
| 2) <input type="checkbox"/> Notice of Draftperson's Patent Drawing Review (PTO-948) | Paper No(s)/Mail Date. _____ |
| 3) <input type="checkbox"/> Information Disclosure Statement(s) (PTO/SB/08) | 5) <input type="checkbox"/> Notice of Informal Patent Application |
| Paper No(s)/Mail Date _____ | 6) <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ |

DETAILED ACTION

A request for continued examination under 37 CFR 1.114, including the fee set forth in 37 CFR 1.17(e), was filed in this application after final rejection. Since this application is eligible for continued examination under 37 CFR 1.114, and the fee set forth in 37 CFR 1.17(e) has been timely paid, the finality of the previous Office action has been withdrawn pursuant to 37 CFR 1.114. Applicant's submission filed on September 15, 2009 has been entered.

The following is a quotation of 35 U.S.C. 103(a) which forms the basis for all obviousness rejections set forth in this Office action:

(a) A patent may not be obtained though the invention is not identically disclosed or described as set forth in section 102 of this title, if the differences between the subject matter sought to be patented and the prior art are such that the subject matter as a whole would have been obvious at the time the invention was made to a person having ordinary skill in the art to which said subject matter pertains. Patentability shall not be negated by the manner in which the invention was made.

Claims 1-8, 15-16 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over EP 1101524 in view of Arno (6,905,663), optionally further in view of either Paules (4,015,546).

EP '524 discloses a process for treating a waste gas containing fluorine containing compound (note title). As shown in Figure 1, a waste gas 9 containing PFCs, oxidizing gases, acidic gases and CO is first passed through a spray column 1 so as to remove solids and Si compounds. The waste gas is then passed through the thermal decomposition device 3, which is also supplied with H₂, O₂ and H₂O to

Art Unit: 1793

decompose the PFCs, oxidizing gases and CO into acidic gases and CO₂. The acidic gases are removed by passage through a subsequent spray column 5, from which treated gas 10 emerges (note paragraph [0023] and the Figure). The thermal decomposition device contains an gamma-alumina packed layer as the catalyst (note paragraph [0022]).

EP '524 further teaches that as for PFC, H₂ or H₂O is added in moles at least equal to the moles necessary for F atom in the PFC to be converted into HF (note paragraph [0018]).

For claims 15-16, the plate members in the heating step are considered as an apparatus limitation, which has little weight in the process claims. Without a showing of criticality or unexpected results, the use of the plate members in the heating step is not seen as a patentable difference because it would have been obvious to one skilled to use any conventional means in the art to heat the gas to be treated in the process of EP '524 to the desired temperature.

Optionally, Paules '546 can be applied to teach that it is known in the art to use baffles in a heating zone to increase the flow path of the gas to be heated to facilitate the heat transfer (note column 11, lines 19-30). Again, it would have been well within the skill of the artisan to select the actual design or shape of the baffles.

The difference is EP '524 does not disclose the step of adding water or hydrogen to the waste gas after heating the waste gas in the presence of oxygen.

Arno '663 discloses a process for the abatement of semiconductor manufacturing effluents containing fluorine gas (note title).

Arno '663 teaches that thermal approaches combine reactive materials and F_2 inside a reactor that is heated using fuel or electrical energy. Existing thermal units require the addition of hydrogen source/fuels such as methane or hydrogen to drive the fluorine reaction to completion, converting fluorine to HF. The by-products generated by the thermal abatement of F_2 typically include hot acids that in turn require the use of a post-treatment water scrubber. The containment of hot concentration acids requires expensive materials of construction to prevent temperature enhanced corrosive attack on lines, vessels and fittings (note column 2, lines 43-58).

In order to overcome the above mentioned deficiencies, Arno '663 discloses a process for abating gaseous fluorocompounds by injecting a fluorocompound abatement medium into the fluorocompound-containing gas, wherein the fluorocompound abatement medium comprises at least one of steam (i.e. water), methane and hydrogen, optionally in further combination with a catalyst effective to enhance the abatement, with the proviso that when the fluorocompound abatement medium contains methane and/or hydrogen, the injection of the fluorocompound abatement medium is conducted under non-combustion conditions (note column 3, lines 23-33). As shown in Figures 1-2, the system used consists a gas preheating stage 6, in which the fluorine-containing gas 12 is flowed into the gas flow passage 24 bounded by passage wall 22 in aluminum block 14. The aluminum block 14 is formed in two half-sections 16 and 18. Each of the half sections has respective channels therein that upon mating the other half sections forms a first throughbore for passage of a water line 26 there through, and a second throughbore for installation of a cartridge heater 20 therein.

Art Unit: 1793

The preheat stage 6 includes an extended length flow path through which the gas stream flows to the reaction stage 7 of the apparatus, while the water line 26 carries water from a suitable source for heating by the cartridge heater 20 to generate steam. The generated steam then is introduced to the gas flow passage 24 at steam entrance 30, at an intermediate section of passage. The steam then mixes and reacts with the fluorine constituents of the gas stream. The heat of the reaction is dissipated by heat exchange cooling coils 32 in cooling section 8 (note column 4, lines 28-63).

As shown in Arno '663, the reaction only take place in the intermediate section, i.e. reaction stage 7, thus, the HF is only formed in reaction stage 7 which can be immediately cooled down in section 8. The need for using expensive materials for construction for handling hot concentrated acid can be avoided.

It would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to inject the water or hydrogen in the process of EP '524 into the waste gas after such waste gas has been preheated, as suggested by Arno '663, because by doing so, at least the preheat section does not require to be constructed with expensive materials that can handle hot acid.

Claims 1-8, 15-16 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Arno '663 in view of EP '524, optionally further in view of Paules '546.

Arno '663 is applied as stated above.

The difference is Arno '663 does not specifically disclose the presence of oxygen in the pre-heating stage 6.

Art Unit: 1793

However, Arno '663 discloses that the reaction by-products generated by the reaction between methane and fluorine gas contain 9% CO.

EP '524 is applied as stated above.

EP '524 teaches that it is desired in the art to not only decompose the PFC but also to convert CO in the exhaust gas to CO₂ (note last chemical equation in column 3 and paragraph [0017]).

It would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to add oxygen, as suggested by EP '524, to the process of Arno '663 so that carbon monoxide can be converted into carbon dioxide. Since the addition of oxygen to the exhaust gas, without adding the hydrogen source, would not form any acid, thus, the oxygen can be added any time, i.e. during the pre-heating stage or the reaction stage.

EP '524 is further applied to teach the step of removing solid and water soluble component from the exhaust gas (note paragraph [0015]).

For claims 15-16, note reasons as stated above and optionally Paules '546 can be applied as stated above.

Applicant's arguments filed September 15, 2009 have been fully considered but they are not persuasive.

Applicants argue that EP '524 fails to disclose or suggest heating an exhaust gas in the presence of oxygen without adding water and/or hydrogen to the exhaust gas

Art Unit: 1793

because EP '524 teaches adding hydrogen and/or water, or hydrogen and/or water and oxygen during the heating.

Granted that it is true, however, Arno is applied as stated above to teach the step of adding water or hydrogen-containing gas after the heating stage in order to avoid forming HF in the heating stage. In response to applicant's arguments against the references individually, one cannot show nonobviousness by attacking references individually where the rejections are based on combinations of references. See *In re Keller*, 642 F.2d 413, 208 USPQ 871 (CCPA 1981); *In re Merck & Co.*, 800 F.2d 1091, 231 USPQ 375 (Fed. Cir. 1986).

Applicants argue that Arno reference does not provide disclosure that would obviate the deficiencies of EP '524.

As stated in the above rejection, Arno fairly teaches that by adding the hydrogen source/fuel after the pre-heating stage, hot concentrated acids would not be formed, thereby the need of using expensive materials of construction to prevent temperature-enhanced corrosive attack on lines, vessels and fittings can be avoided (note column 2, lines 50-58).

Applicants argue that Paules reference does not provide disclosure that would obviate the above mentioned deficiencies of EP '524.

Paules is only applied to teach the use of baffles in a heating zone to increase the flow path of the gas to be heated to facilitate the heat transfer, not to teach the step of adding water or hydrogen after the heating step.

Art Unit: 1793

The prior art made of record and not relied upon is considered pertinent to applicant's disclosure.

Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to Ngoc-Yen M. Nguyen whose telephone number is (571) 272-1356. The examiner can normally be reached on Part time schedule.

If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the examiner's supervisor, Stanley Silverman can be reached on (571) 272-1358. The fax phone number for the organization where this application or proceeding is assigned is 571-273-8300.

Information regarding the status of an application may be obtained from the Patent Application Information Retrieval (PAIR) system. Status information for published applications may be obtained from either Private PAIR or Public PAIR. Status information for unpublished applications is available through Private PAIR only. For more information about the PAIR system, see <http://pair-direct.uspto.gov>. Should you have questions on access to the Private PAIR system, contact the Electronic Business Center (EBC) at 866-217-9197 (toll-free). If you would like assistance from a USPTO Customer Service Representative or access to the automated information system, call 800-786-9199 (IN USA OR CANADA) or 571-272-1000.

/Ngoc-Yen M. Nguyen/
Primary Examiner, Art Unit 1793

nmn
December 8, 2009